

# A VISION OF Youth Ministry

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## Preface

In May, 1975, the Advisory Board for Youth Activities, USCC, commissioned a paper on total youth ministry in response to a need for in-depth study of this developing field of ministry. The process designed for producing the paper was based on the belief that any description of youth ministry must grow out of and be confirmed by the lived experience of the persons who exercise this ministry on a daily basis.

Consequently, the paper was developed over 15 months, in three separate stages of writing and consultation. Hundreds of individuals contributed to this process, and their detailed comments substantially refined the paper at each stage. The final version printed here reflects the beginnings of a national consensus on a vision of total youth ministry as it is understood by youth directors, youth, school superintendents, catechists, coaches, members of the academic community, retreat leaders, young adult youth ministers, scouting personnel and others. In the future, this document will be supplemented with materials describing working models of youth ministry and with resources pertaining to the many practical concerns of those involved in youth ministry.

The Department of Education, USCC, is indebted to the many persons who shared their insights and expertise with us out of a common commitment to youth ministry. We gratefully acknowledge their invaluable assistance, and hope for a continuing dialogue as we continue to clarify and strengthen the Church's ministry with youth.

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## Introduction

From people involved in youth work across the country comes the realization that the Church's ministry with youth is entering a new day. Many young people and adults on the grassroots level are experimenting with and creating new forms of pastoral ministry with youth. They have had the imagination and courage to venture down new roads in their attempt to respond to the needs of young people. Today's youth clearly call the Church to ministry, affirming their right to recognition and responsibility in the faith community and declaring that when the Church fails to respond to their needs and gifts, their right of becoming is denied.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Bicentennial Hearing, 1975 National Catholic Youth Organization Federation Convention*, p. 18.

leadership of these adults and youth has given rise to the need for all those involved with young people to give thoughtful consideration to the common foundations of their ministry.

This paper presents a vision that reaffirms and recasts the Church's ministry with youth. It offers a focus for the work of youth ministry, and sets forth an outline of its major components. The paper pays respect to the living reality of youth ministry by avoiding a delineation so rigid or detailed as to limit further development. On the contrary, by identifying some of the key concepts related to youth ministry, this paper will serve to stimulate further reflection and creative growth in the ministry of the Church with youth.

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## I. THE MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

As one among many ministries of the Church, youth ministry must be understood in terms of the mission and ministry of the whole Church, the community of persons who believe in Jesus Christ and continue his saving work through the action of the Holy Spirit. The Church's mission is three-fold: to proclaim the good news of salvation, to offer itself as a group of people transformed by the Spirit into a community of faith, hope, and love, and to bring God's justice and love to others through service in its individual, social and political dimensions.<sup>2</sup>

The ministry of the Church is the means through which the Church fulfills its three-fold mission. As it is used in the earliest sources, the word "ministry" implies "the work that is done by those who believe, the service to each other and the world around them that members of the Christian community perform in the name of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Church: The Continuing Quest*. Richard P. McBrien, New Jersey: Newman Press, 1970) p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> "Ministry/The Work of Every Believer," Richard Colby and Charity Weymouth, *Origins*, February 12, 1976, Vol. 5, #34, p. 535.

This ministry of the Church is a common endeavor that unites all Christians in shared responsibility. In the broadest sense, there is no Christian who is not a minister of the Gospel. Each person, however, experiences a particular calling to ministry based on his or her unique gifts. In St. Paul's words, "We have gifts that differ according to the form bestowed on each of us. One's gift may be prophecy; its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry; it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching; one with the power of exhortation should exhort. He who gives alms should do so generously; he who rules should exercise his authority with care; he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully." (Rom. 12:6-8)

Paul emphasizes, however, that all of these different qualities are one in their source and in their ultimate goal. "There are many gifts but the same spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good . . . it is one and the same Spirit

who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills." (Cor. 12:4,5,11)

Each Christian has a responsibility to use his or her gift for the good of the community and to minister as Jesus did—healing, teaching, guiding, preaching, celebrating, worshipping, enabling, and serving. Ministry is at the very core of Christian life and its essence is expressed with challenging simplicity in the words "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

As Henri Nouwen expressed the concept in his book, *Creative Ministry*, "Ministry means the ongoing attempt to put one's own search for God, with all the moments of pain and joy, despair and hope, at the disposal of those who want to join this search but do not know how . . . we lay down our life to

give new life . . . we realize that young people call for Christians who are willing to develop their sensitivity to God's presence in their own lives, as well as the lives of others, and to offer their experience as a way of recognition and liberation to their fellow people."<sup>4</sup>

Because ministry involves the giving of self in relationship to another, the Church's youth ministry must be founded in the radical commitment to lay down one's life in service to the young people whose lives are touched. The primacy of this loving gift of self ensures fidelity to the ministry of Jesus and guides the work of youth ministry in fulfilling the Church's three-fold mission of Word, Community, and Service.

<sup>4</sup> *Creative Ministry*. Henri Nouwen, (New York: Doubleday, 1971) p. 116.

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## II. A VISION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

As a manifestation of the Church's mission, youth ministry has many characteristics in common with other ministries of the Church. However, youth ministry has its own particular history and process, its own "story" which guides those who exercise this ministry. A gospel account that especially captures the dynamics of youth ministry is the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-35)

When Jesus first met these disciples on the road after his death and resurrection, he asked them what it was that they were so deeply involved in discussing. He listened carefully to their reply as they told him of the events in Jerusalem that had troubled and confused them. When they finished, he responded by beginning to interpret the meaning of the events they had witnessed. Their sharing continued until they reached Emmaus, where the disciples persuaded Jesus to join them for supper. Their encounter culminated in the breaking of the bread, in which the disciples recognized their friend as Jesus.

In the same way, youth ministry begins with a presence to the young which engenders the confidence and hope to ask questions. Attentive listening to the concerns of the young person enables the youth minister to understand more deeply the youth's needs and stage of growth. At that point, the

youth minister is able to respond, sharing with the young person the help, insights, or values that are the fruit of a life rooted in faith. By drawing out of the youth reflections on the action of God in the events of his or her own life, this sharing enables the young person to begin formulating answers in the light of witnessed tradition and gospel values. The bond created in this relationship is celebrated in community, most fully in the Eucharistic celebration of the Christian community.

If we follow the Emmaus model, youth ministry "is the Church's mission of reaching into the daily lives of modern young people and showing them the presence of God. . . . It is a return to the way Jesus taught, putting ministry before teaching and people over institutions. In this ministry, religious content is a way of life for the person ministering and the young person touched, through a sequential development of faith, dependent on the readiness and need of the adolescent."<sup>5</sup>

The Emmaus story is not the only model for youth ministry that is provided by the Scripture narratives. Regardless of the specific gospel story used, however, what is most important is that the vision of youth ministry be understood and carried

<sup>5</sup> Written intervention of Archbishop John R. Quinn of Oklahoma City at the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome.

out in a manner that is grounded in Scripture and gospel values and oriented to persons as fundamentally as Jesus' ministry was.

## **A. Diminisions of Youth Ministry**

**Youth Ministry is to, with, by and for youth.**

Youth ministry is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community.

Youth ministry is *TO* youth when the Christian community exercises its pastoral role in meeting young people's needs. Ministry to youth draws on the resources and gifts of the adult community to provide opportunities for growth that young people need but cannot always attain on their own. Some ways in which the ministry to youth is currently being carried out include guidance counseling, catechetical programs, organized sports activities, leadership training and job placement for disadvantaged youth, parish youth centers, family life programs, camping opportunities, Catholic schools, etc.

Youth ministry is *WITH* youth because young people share with adults a common responsibility to carry out the Church's mission. When youth have the opportunity to exercise this responsibility jointly with adults, recognition is given to the particular gifts and insights which these young people bring to their family, parish, or neighborhood. Ministry with youth occurs when they participate as members of parish councils, serve as catechists, lectors, and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, and share with adults a responsibility for retreats, community service, or action for justice.

Youth ministry is *BY* youth when young people exercise their own ministry to others, particularly to their peers. The operation of peer counseling programs for drug abuse and other problems, tutoring, and many forms of community service are all parts of ministry by youth. Youth also minister to others when they serve as team members for youth retreats, teachers in catechetical programs, and leaders of youth activities.

Youth ministry is *FOR* youth in that adult youth ministers attempt to interpret the needs of youth and act as advocates in articulating youth's legitimate concerns to the wider community. The adult involved

in youth ministry has special access to the views of youth, and ordinarily has a degree of credibility, influence, and resources unavailable to young people. This places a responsibility on the adult to speak for youth and to sensitize and motivate other adults where youth needs are concerned. Ministers for youth might alert parish or diocesan councils to a desire for youth liturgies, work with community leaders to resolve gang problems, or help parents and children to work out misunderstandings and communication difficulties.

The great diversity in youth ministry is reflected in the above examples, and owes its existence to the importance of each distinct dimension of the ministry to, with, by, and for youth.

## **B. Goals of Youth Ministry**

Youth ministry is a multi-dimensional reality, but all of its varied facets are brought into focus by a common dedication to the following goals.

1. Youth ministry works to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.
2. Youth ministry seeks to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the faith community.

The Church in ministry with youth is committed to the fullest personal development of young people, particularly those who face the greatest barriers in achieving this goal by reason of material poverty, loneliness, racial discrimination, social injustice, or physical or mental handicaps. This personal development encompasses relationship to self, others, and God, particularly within the context of supportive community.

Many youth experience themselves as alienated from or out of place within the life and work of the whole parish community. Youth ministry seeks to draw young people into the supportive experience of Christian community, and to assist the parish community to welcome the young and share its ministry with them.

In these respects youth ministry is both a ministry *within* the Church, ministering to believers, and a ministry *of* the Church that reaches out to serve others with the love and humility of Christ.

## C. Principles of Youth Ministry

The living dynamics of youth ministry, through which these goals are achieved, may be best articulated in several key principles of ministry. These assumptions give youth ministry its particular character and underlie its effectiveness.

### 1. Youth is a unique time of personal development.

The teenage years represent the critical period of transit from childhood to adulthood, during which physical, psychological and social growth is more concentrated than at any comparable time span in life. Since the development of faith is tied directly to the interpretation of meaning in one's life and experiences, the teenage years are an important juncture for the individual's spiritual development. The youth begins to forge a personal sense of meaning and set of values, and becomes capable of a deeper personal relationship with Christ and responsible Christian action. To help young people as they struggle with this effort, youth ministry must involve the understanding of parents, the guidance and example of peers and significant adults, and the ongoing maturing of the faith community which accepts the responsibility to share in the youth's search for meaning and a language of faith.

### 2. Youth ministry is concerned with the total person.

Youth ministers should take seriously their responsibility to help young people grow as total persons, socially, spiritually, culturally, etc.

The total young person has many important concerns which must be understood in the context of daily living, including family situations, relationships with peers, academic and extra-curricular involvement, response to religion, and moral value questions. In the life of each young person, different needs express themselves at various times during the process of maturing, and one of the hallmarks of youth ministry should be sensitivity to the young person's readiness for new steps.

### 3. Youth ministry is rooted in relationships.

Youth ministry involves first and foremost, not programs, but relationships. Within accepting relationships, young people are enabled to face and to accept themselves and others, to clarify their goals and values, and to dare to become the persons they are called to be. Relationships that form youth ministry are those that form community and mediate

the grace of Christ, challenging young people to greater growth and openness to God.

~~The relationship of persons in a ministerial situation involves a mutual openness to change and willingness to grow.~~ Both youth and adults are enriched by this bond, in such a way that the faith community is vitalized and the risen Christ witnessed to.

### 4. Youth ministry is a call to community.

God calls youth and adults alike to be members of His people, the Church, to join in pilgrimage to the Father and share insights into the meaning and value of life. As the Body of Christ, the community brings to youth the life-giving presence of Jesus in Word and Sacrament. ~~Absolutely essential to effective youth ministry is the support and lived example of the surrounding faith community, particularly the parish.~~ Without this, youth ministry exists in a vacuum that cuts short fuller growth and maturity in faith. Because the young person is involved most fully in the local communities of family, parish and school, youth ministry is most effectively carried out in these settings. Youth ministry serves to support and enhance the basic faith commitment of youth in each of these community contexts. Youth ministry also exerts a force for healing and reconciliation in those communities which suffer from the strain of youth's need to reject and then re-integrate their roots.

### 5. Youth ministry proceeds as an affirmation of gifts.

The recognition and development of individual gifts and the building of a positive sense of personal worth and ability are an important aspect of the process of youth ministry. To effectively call the young person toward maturity, affirmation must be united to genuine trust of the young person's integrity and ability. By awakening a young person's potential and accepting his or her gifts, the community enriches its life and its own ability to minister to others.

### 6. True ministry duplicates itself.

It is essential that youth ministry evoke in each person the willingness to offer ministry to others. Youth ministry should call youth not only to join programs, but also to join with others in living out the Church's mission to share the good news, live in community, and serve others in love and justice.

The interrelated principles outlined above serve as a foundation for the concept of youth ministry, but this listing is not necessarily exhaustive. With the

maturity of the ministry, others will be able to identify additional principles to complement those described here.

## D. Context of Youth Ministry

In all places, youth ministry occurs within a given social, cultural, and religious context which shapes the specific form of the ministry. Youth culture, secular society, family, and the local Church community are some of the institutions which form the context within which youth ministry must be carried out. Each of these environments exerts an important influence on young people, a consideration which should be reflected appropriately in balanced youth ministry programs.

The influence of youth culture varies in specifics but remains constant in its high degree of pressure for peer conformity. In some respects the young person's milieu contributes many creative opportunities for ministry, such as the interpretation of popular music in terms of gospel values, or the formation of youth movements organized to serve others in love and justice. On the other hand, the environment of youth can present strong pressures towards behaviors that are destructive of self or others and contrary to Christian values, such as drug or alcohol abuse, irresponsible sexual activity, and violence. In today's America, there are few effective efforts to reverse the negative influences that are a part of the youth scene; the tendencies of society, Church, and family towards material success, prejudice, and dehumanized social interactions run counter to the beatitudes, and overshadow the development of the genuine community and justice envisioned by our nation's founders. In our society, too, many young people experience oppression and injustice because of age, economic need, racial discrimination, unemployment, or disability. Youth ministry involves the whole faith community speaking out on behalf of these youth, and working for the resolution of the conflicts they face. In this, youth ministry involves the struggle to present to youth a prophetic witness to Christian life against the predominant value orientation of the general culture, a struggle that renders supportive community all the more important.

The context of the family for the work of youth ministry is crucial, because the young person's relationships with family members are such clear determinants of his or her religious behavior and

values.<sup>6</sup> Most young people enter a time of ostensible alienation from the family, a period during which youth attempt to discover their own unique identities by wholesale repudiation of the values of family and childhood. The influence of peers becomes very significant at this point, and often gives rise to tension regarding the relative importance of family and friends. Whether accepted or rejected, however, the family is a concern of great importance for young people; for many, a sign of growth into adulthood is the gradual re-integration of family relationships and traditions into the life of the young person. During the more rebellious periods, many families experience difficult tensions and painful lack of communication; they have a special need for the reconciliation and healing to which youth ministers and family life ministers should address themselves. The building of community among groups of youth and their parents eases many of these tensions and leads to healing dialogue. Many families experience important growth as a loving community during this time as they exercise a mutual ministry of patience, communication, trust, and support of one another. In all aspects of youth ministry, the needs and situation of the family remain a paramount concern.

A final consideration regarding the context of youth ministry relates to the local faith community, most especially the parish. As emphasized in the preceding section, the whole parish community is the life-sustaining backdrop for effective youth ministry.

Programs or activity in the name of youth ministry are sterile in the absence of adults who witness the values communicated by those who minister to youth. Young people need the example, fellowship, and acceptance of clergy, religious and lay adults to choose love, to choose community, and to choose faith.

A sensitive program of ministry with youth should give careful consideration to the effects of these four important aspects of the youth environment: youth culture, secular society, family, and local faith community.

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<sup>6</sup> *Religion and American Youth: With Emphasis on Catholic Adolescents and Young Adults*. Raymond H. Potvin, Dean R. Hoge, Hart M. Nelsen. (The Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development, Washington, D.C., 1976).

## E. Components of Youth Ministry

The preceding sections of this paper set down a broad foundation for parish or diocesan youth ministry programs. To examine the concrete dimensions of such programs, seven components of youth ministry can be identified which describe distinct aspects of youth ministry work: Word, Worship, Creating Community, Guidance and Healing, Justice and Service, Enablement, and Advocacy. Each of these is an expression of the ministry of the Christian community and acts to fulfill the Church's mission. The number and order of these components are not absolutes; however, they represent a consensus on the part of persons involved with youth ministry and are useful as a working description of the most important elements of youth ministry.

### WORD

Although the ministry of the word in the Church touches more than youth ministry, it is a very important component of the ministry with young people. The ministry of the word is the sharing with others of the gospel message, the good news of God's love and salvation as shown to us in Jesus Christ. This sharing involves elements of what are commonly known as evangelization and catechesis.

Many rich and fruitful insights into the ministry of the word are provided by Pope Paul VI when he writes "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the good news into all strata of humanity from within and making it new." In the same message he makes the point that the Church evangelizes when it seeks, through the power of God's word, to convert "both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs."<sup>7</sup> As it is described above by Pope Paul, evangelization is a complex process that could involve many aspects of the Church's ministry. In some cases, the ministry of the word involves the initial proclamation of the faith, preceded by "the first means of evangelization . . . the witness of an authentically Christian life,"<sup>8</sup> and followed by the communication of the gospel message.

However, the ministry of the word in relation to youth involves not only evangelization, but also

<sup>7</sup> "Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization," Pope Paul VI, *Origins*, January 8, 1976, Vol. 5, #29, p. 459.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

catechesis in order to render faith "living, conscious, and active."<sup>9</sup> The ministry of the word is associated most often with formal catechetical approaches, whether in Catholic schools or parish schools of religion. However, as in the story of the road to Emmaus, catechesis is also effectively carried out informally in small groups where there is a genuine concern to join with young people in reflecting on their lives and experiences in the light of Christian faith. A creative diversity of catechetical approaches could be considered in determining the precise model that might be most beneficial at any given point. In every case, however, the approach used should be based on the needs of the persons involved, and should affirm young people as responsible participants in their own growth in faith.<sup>10</sup>

A particularly successful model in the ministry of the word is the youth retreat, for which young people come together for a day or a weekend of intensive Christian living and peer witness to faith. Catechesis, healing, enabling, worship, and many other aspects of youth ministry occur during these retreats in many forms. However, retreats are most effective as part of an ongoing program that will provide both preparation and adequate follow-through. As an integral part of a parish or school catechetical program, a youth retreat enables young people to experience Christian faith at a level and in a way that is seldom possible within the limitations of the more academic framework.

The fullest effectiveness of the ministry of the word requires sensitivity to many other aspects of youth ministry because youth need to experience the Christian message in terms of the realities most important in their daily lives: love, family, life values, justice, etc.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, every catechist working with youth is a youth minister, and sometimes will be a healer, enabler, or advocate. In the same sense, all persons involved in other aspects of youth ministry may exercise on occasion the ministry of the word.

If ministry, in a sense, is making Christ present to people, then the ministry of the word for both adults and youth is making him present through the message of the gospel as we live it and share it.

<sup>9</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J., (New York: The American Press, 1966) p. 406.

<sup>10</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1971) p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

## WORSHIP

Worship builds and celebrates the relationship between God and His people; it is a response to God's word, and a moment of personal and communal encounter with God. For youth ministry, the aspect of worship includes the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacraments, para-liturgical services, prayer sessions, scripture study groups, and similar expressions of the faith life of youth. It is the focal point of an effective youth ministry program.

One way in which worship fulfills the vision of youth ministry is in building and celebrating a community of youth. If properly approached, youth liturgies can evoke authentic involvement and can strengthen the youth group. Proper celebration implies a sensitivity to the needs of the worshipping community; for this reason youth liturgies should be celebrated respectfully and tastefully so that all participants have a tangible awareness of the presence of God. The priest has a responsibility "to make the celebration festive, fraternal, and meditative." As the presiding minister he is called forth to share his faith life with the gathered community of people by word, gesture, and presence.<sup>12</sup>

Youth worship must be taken seriously by the young people as well as by the adult leadership of the parish. Youth ministers should celebrate what youth celebrate, and invite them to help in the planning of the liturgies. In the framework of youth worship, young people can celebrate the spectrum of their feelings, concerns, and joys, using signs and symbols that have special meaning for them.

Worship also fulfills the goals of youth ministry by providing one of the richest settings for intergenerational sharing. In the context of the whole faith community, young people experience the faith and prayerfulness of a celebrating community.

Many occasions of worship need not involve Eucharistic liturgy; para-liturgical services should be encouraged, especially in areas where clergy are few and heavily burdened. It is important for the spiritual formation of youth that the priest or youth ministers in a parish spend considerable time sharing prayer with them, leading them towards personal as well as group prayer and facilitating penance services, scripture services, and other celebrations of life, seasons, and sorrows.

<sup>12</sup> *Directory for Masses With Children*. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1974) p. 5.

Incorporation into a parish faith community means involvement on a communal level in prayer and worship. A sense of prayer and involvement in liturgy may be promoted in parishes by small group prayer, days of reflection, special liturgies for youth (Penance services, Eucharistic celebrations), development of good parish liturgies, involvement of young people as lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, and musicians, special prayer services that are youth-oriented, and spiritual formation programs that promote an understanding of prayer and the ability to pray.

Youth worship must be a living interaction between God and young people, an event that remembers the personal and religious events of the past and initiates even deeper involvement for future becoming, but always celebrates the present relationships as the young person praises, sings, shouts, or whispers "Amen."

## CREATING COMMUNITY

The creation of youth community is a component of youth ministry through which youth grow personally and spiritually. In the life of a community, young people and a few significant adults learn to listen to one another, and in doing so, to hear God speak. As they try to help each other express in words the truths they experience, they learn a living theology. In this kind of community youth have a mutual ministry to each other. They share themselves, their convictions, their faith with each other. That the gospel is communicated and lived in this climate is the premise which underlies experiences such as the youth retreat programs which have been developed around the country.

The creation of community in the family and parish settings is also fruitful for youth ministry. Building new paths of communication and providing opportunities for deeper levels of sharing are part of the ministry of creating intergenerational community; they lead to a situation in which each generation learns to listen and respond to the other. As young people and adults open their lives to each other and realize their common membership in the community of faith, they establish a new basis for identity—the family of God.

The ministry of creating community is also, in a sense, a ministry of celebration. In community, young people are provided with opportunities to celebrate the joys of life in thanksgiving, and to share the suffering and struggles of life with the support of others. Activities such as outings and parties, camp-

ing and outdoor experiences, sports, music, and dance are natural expressions of the young person's involvement with life. The occasion of a community celebration nurtures the constructive self-concepts and fruitful relationships that motivate youth ministry.

### **GUIDANCE AND HEALING**

Through the work of guidance and healing, youth ministry responds to the profound needs of modern youth for spiritual and personal counseling, for vocational guidance, and for the reconciliation that heals the wounds of alienation.

The youth minister exercises these aspects of ministry under many conditions, from highly structured situations such as high school guidance counseling to very unstructured moments of sharing that arise as a natural product of a relationship of trust. Frequently, the atmosphere of an evening coffee house or the informality of a youth drop-in center are conducive to counseling on a deep personal level; often, the growth and learning that a retreat produces can stimulate a prayerful and meaningful celebration of reconciliation.

As a counselor and guide, the youth minister needs to be aware of the resources and opportunities available in the community because there are frequent occasions when a good referral is the most appropriate response to a young person's needs. Good communication and cooperation among the many agencies established to serve youth is a vital aspect of an effective ministry of guidance.

Youth and adults involved in youth ministry are called to be healers and reconcilers in various ways. Family life in many instances is strained by the conflict of needs that may occur during the teenage years; often youth feel alienated from the societal structures and authority figures that influence their lives; in addition, many young people experience a deep alienation from their peers because they are "different"—racially, economically, physically, or socially.

These divisions and wounds in the young person's world can be healed in Christ through the reconciling efforts of peers, family members, or a youth minister who has the confidence of the young person. Peer counseling is an especially effective avenue of healing that should be encouraged. Whenever implemented, however, it should provide necessary training and support groups for the counselors. There are many ways in which youth ministry involves the role of healing, but the fullest expression of

this calling is in the prayerful and sacramental reconciliation of the Christian community with God in the New Rite of Penance.

### **JUSTICE AND SERVICE**

One of the principles underlying youth ministry is that it calls young people themselves to minister to others. Young people have the idealism and sympathy which are requisites for genuine service, and they are generous with their time, energy, and talents.

The justice and service aspect of youth ministry is based on the responsibility of the Church to extend the kingdom of God in the world through service and action on behalf of justice. As the bishops affirmed in the landmark statement, "Justice in the World," "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel."

As a natural outflowing of the community experience of faith, service and action on behalf of justice should be constitutive dimensions of the Church's youth ministry. First of all, by exercising moral leadership and sharing its material and human resources, the Church in ministry with youth must live out a commitment to young people and communities who suffer discrimination, poverty, handicaps, and injustice. Secondly, by providing models, experiences, and programs, the faith community of the Church should fulfill its responsibility to educate youth for justice and to call young people themselves to action on behalf of others. Both of these responsibilities are important; together, they balance the social and individual aspects of Christian action.

A consciousness of the demands of justice and willingness to serve should characterize the overall stance of youth ministry—not confined to specific programs, but penetrating prayer, recreation, creativity, and Christian witness. Both youth and adults engaged in youth ministry should strive to deepen their sensitivity to the innate dignity of all persons and to the right of each individual to fulfill his or her fullest potential.

In an especially urgent way, the demands of Christian justice today call youth and the faith community at-large to join with Spanish-Speaking, Black, and Native American youth and their communities in dealing with prejudice, and to share with other young people the struggle against hunger, unemployment and injustice. Youth and adult ministers should also demonstrate sensitivity to the

needs of young people who are handicapped or in trouble, and exercise leadership in meeting their needs. By taking the initiative for responsible Christian action, even when it entails self-sacrifice, the youth minister and adult community provide a model for young people that is more eloquent than speeches.

Young people have many gifts to share with the aged and lonely, the disadvantaged, children and the poor. It is critical that youth ministers create opportunities through which young persons can share these gifts.<sup>13</sup>

Well-balanced programs that involve action, reflection, and education enable young people to develop into responsible Christians who incorporate into their mature faith a commitment to justice and self-giving love of others.

### ENABLEMENT

The concept of enablement is expressed in various ways throughout this paper; in essence, it involves a relationship of trust and challenge in which one is led to new growth and self-confidence. Enablement in youth ministry has a dual focus: the enablement of both *youth* and *adults* to grow, lead, and minister.

#### Enablement of Youth

The document *To Teach As Jesus Did* affirms that "Youth have a right and duty to be active participants in the work of the Church in the world. Obviously, however, they face certain obstacles because they are young and lack experience, organizational skills, and other necessary abilities. Adults engaged in youth ministry therefore should function mainly as guides and helpers by giving young people direction and support."<sup>14</sup>

A critical task before youth ministers today is to recognize the value of peer ministry among youth and to help young people to develop their gifts to be used in the wider community. Young people should be welcomed as co-workers in youth ministry, and programs which develop their leadership talents should have a central place.

Every young person or team of youth who pursue an active ministry should be counseled by a qualified adult who can offer wisdom and support. Such an adult will not dominate and suppress the

leadership of the youth ministers but will challenge and release it, aware of the ever-amazing new ways by which young people reach one another.

The mark of effective youth ministry is that it will involve young people in ministry. A real and active role for youth must be opened in the Church. In the past, regrettably, the Church has not communicated the central fact that young people are important and needed in its real work. Young people are willing to take their place in the ministry of the Church and work long hours to share the presence of God they are discovering. They need training and support from the whole Christian community. With constructive, enthusiastic involvement of people who care, these young persons will bring the healing touch of Christ and his word to youth who are lonely, frightened, and waiting for someone who understands.

#### Enablement of Adults

Christian adults should be with the young people co-seeking, co-helping, co-working. Such a shared cooperation affords all involved an opportunity to grow in Christian love, a chance to share interests and concerns, the possibility to broaden and communicate vision, as well as the opportunity present for each individual to grow in self-esteem.

Adults, faith-filled Christians, are the very center of ministry with youth—adults who are in touch with their faith, living the gospel in all aspects of their lives. Young people look for models, persons they can look up to, and not simply persons with whom they can build a peer relationship. Some of the qualities that should characterize an adult involved in youth ministry are: the quality of presence that a person brings to time spent with the young, the ability to listen deeply to others, the ability to be comfortable in a variety of different settings and the ability to speak credibly of one's own faith experience. What the young need today are not adults who will hand over information, but adults who will hand over themselves and the secret of their own faith.<sup>15</sup>

This personal growth on the part of the youth minister, and the skills and techniques that improve his or her effectiveness should be provided to adults in youth ministry as a way of fulfilling the call to enable adults to minister.

If ministry to youth is to be taken seriously, dioceses and parishes should target key adults for

<sup>13</sup> *To Teach As Jesus Did*, p. 37, para. #133.

<sup>14</sup> *To Teach As Jesus Did*, p. 36, 37, para. #132.

<sup>15</sup> *A Future for Youth Catechesis*. Michael Warren, C.F.X. (New York: Paulist Press, 1975) pp. 29-39.

training and budget a significant portion of their funds to underwrite the development and maintenance of such a program.

Training an adult for youth ministry is a process of enabling the person to further his or her spiritual growth, increasing an awareness of doctrinal content and of a philosophy of youth ministry, and developing personal skills of communicating and teamwork. Training adults will require a review of their own spiritual lives and creative strength as well as an understanding of the young person's environment and spirituality. This training should be comprehensive, practical and on-going, and allow for the sharing of experiences and techniques with other ministry teams.

~~A well-run and well-financed adult training program can launch a strong youth ministry effort, which in turn has the potential to affect and vitalize every level of parish and diocesan life.~~

## ADVOCACY

Advocacy in youth ministry means listening, caring, interpreting. An advocate for youth shows dedication by interpreting and speaking for youth before the Church and secular community. Advocacy "gets down" to the everyday practicality of being a buffer, an intermediary, a broker. It is a call to be a true listener who can then accurately represent the position of youth in the public forum.

In many respects, the advocate acts as a bridge builder because he or she reflects on the attitudes and opinions of the young, determines what they are saying and what they want from Church and society, and transmits these insights to the appropriate persons.

The advocate promotes among young people a sense of being both wanted and needed, and facilitates the ministry of youth by treating them as responsible persons whose views are important.

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## III. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

### A. Administrative Support and Leadership

"It is the consensus that the Church is neglecting its responsibilities to youth and young adults. There is a lack of interest and involvement on the part of the priests with the youth of their parishes. It is our feeling that parishes have set a priority on money instead of ministry."

(Youth Position Paper, Bicentennial Hearing, NCYO Federation Convention, San Antonio, Texas)

If the Church is to take youth ministry seriously, then youth and clergy must reach out and respond to one another. Administrative support and leadership involves spiritual, emotional and financial backing from bishops, pastors and other administrators. No program can be effective or on-going without appropriate support.

Several suggestions which were made by youth representatives participating in the NCYO Federation Convention Bicentennial Hearing and which have widespread validity are:

1. Youth needs should be incorporated into the parish budget. Youth should participate on the parish council, liturgy committees, and other parish organizations. Through this mutual sharing, the parishes would be more unified.
2. Existing youth agencies should be given a broader financial base in order to reach those groups or individuals who have been neglected in the past, e.g. minorities.
3. Youth and clergy, especially bishops, should cooperate in a joint effort to communicate through such methods as dialogue, workshops, and youth conventions.
4. Seminarians should be trained in youth ministry as a regular course of study.
5. Parishes should recognize the leadership abilities of their youth and initiate training programs for them.<sup>16</sup>

If the Church is seriously ready to pursue vital youth ministry, then funds, planning, and both full

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<sup>16</sup> *Minutes of the Bicentennial Hearing, 1975 National Catholic Youth Organization Federation Convention, p. 33.*

time and part time trained personnel must be committed to the effort. In particular, full-time lay ministers should be utilized, with adequate pay and security for their needs.

## **B. Collaboration**

No one aspect of youth ministry is independent of others; they are all interdependent elements of a unified total vision. The multi-faceted nature of youth ministry requires a process of collaboration among all persons involved in it, rather than fragmentation or competition. In responding to the total young person, youth ministry touches on educational, psychological, social, and spiritual needs, and requires the complementary skills of catechists, liturgists, coaches, young people, counselors, parents, adult advisors, and others. Part of the vision of youth ministry is to present to youth the richness of the person of Christ, which perhaps exceeds the ability of one person to capture, but which might be effected by the collective ministry of the many persons who make up the Church. No single diocesan structure can be proposed that will suit the needs for collaboration in every diocese, nor can any one structure for parish organization serve as a definitive model. A variety of organizational models have been and will be developed to meet the varying needs of different localities and communities, be they urban, rural, industrialized, Spanish speaking, pre-dominantly non-Catholic, economically disadvantaged, or otherwise characterized.

In all of these developing models, however, the process of dialogue, collaboration and joint planning is the key to ending fragmentation and restoring a sense of balance to the ministry with youth. The source of this renewal will be the Christian community's serious response to St. Paul's call to share with one another the gifts of the spirit for the fulfillment of Jesus' mission.

## **C. Call to Action**

On May 9, 1975, Pope Paul VI said:

"... we think that we have every reason to have confidence in Christian youth: youth will not fail

the Church if within the Church there are enough older people able to understand it, love it, guide it and to open up to it a future by passing on to it with complete fidelity the truth which endures. . . . And this is why we are pleased to dedicate more expressly to you, the young Christians of the present day, the promise of the Church of Tomorrow, this celebration of spiritual joy."<sup>17</sup>

Youth ministry today presents us with the challenge to help reveal the Christ of the gospel and to exhibit our faith in community and in our personal relationships. This is a time of hope and building for the future. More than ever, it is evident today that youth genuinely hunger for the good news of Jesus Christ, and that faith communities are equipped to share it with them if their vision is broad and creative. Many youth ministers have already accepted this challenge. They are examining traditional structures and programs to determine how the objectives of youth ministry are being fulfilled in an attempt to forge a ministry that will meet the real needs of youth today. Now is the time for each person involved with youth to accept the same challenge. The situation is reminiscent of the scene in the Acts of the Apostles as the apostles gazed up into the heavens when Jesus returned to his father. For a few moments the apostles were lost in bewilderment and felt like orphans, not knowing what to do. Only the two mysterious men that appeared brought them back to reality by asking, "Men of Galilee why do you stand here looking up at the skies? This Jesus who has been taken from you will return, just as you saw him go up into the heavens." (Acts 1:10-11)

For us, as for the apostles, now is the time for action. The vision has been presented. There are many possibilities. It remains to be made a living reality. May the spirit guide each youth minister in this work together.

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<sup>17</sup> *On Christian Joy: Apostolic Exhortation*. Pope Paul VI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1975) pp. 30-31.

August 1/87

0

13 - 35 age

13 - 18

8 - 13

19 17

3

1) young people are not participating in church activities  
gathering — This is our problem.

lack of purpose.

no opportunity for growth

They are not welcome

No values in Am. Church, they seek in Prot. Churches.

# Diocesan Council

1. Time frame
2. Children - expand.
3. College -
4. Budget.

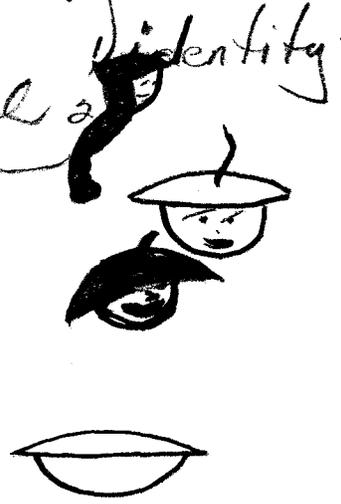
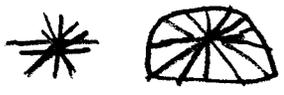
1. Mission
2. Implementation
3. TIME frame
4. Budget

Goals of the programs: Steve  
 More specific in programs + budget

Time frame?  
 Time FRAME

Causes/needs/attitudes  
 ↳ too general - approach ↳ Identity  
 ↳ Implementation ↳ natural  
 ↳ Parishes ↳

1. Problems + needs should be better defined.  
 Needs " " " " " "



2. Goals of the programs - Steve discussed  
 ie College program + over 30 (Machatta) (group)  
 ie Children (?)

3 Report should be expanded - too general.

Social + Service

The An - America \ ° 9 ° \ in all stages

Boniface -

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

PRING 1988

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

- E 63742 Forming Parish Ministry
- E 63654 Life Cycle II: Middle Years and Beyond
- E 63665 Marriage and Family Therapy
- E 64063 Supervised Practicum in Spiritual Direction *I*
- E 64330 Family Ministry (Specialist)
- E 64069 Practicum in Pastoral Counseling
- E 64121 Adult Religious Education (Specialist)
- E 63388 Moral Theology: Living the Christian Life
- E 64070 Coordinating Seminar: Formation
- E 63220 The Nature and Mission of the Christian Community
- E 63350 Images of the Human in the Christian Story
- E 63428 Spirituality and the Arts
- E 63064 Biblical Theology: Luke-Acts
- E 63806 History of Christian Spirituality II
- E 63667 Personality: Spiritual Change and Growth
- E 63091 Spirituality of the Gospels
- E 63424 Foundations of Religious Education
- E 63021 Spiritual Message of the Prophets
- E 63841 Special Questions in Ministry with Youth and Young Adults
- E 63126 Reconciliation and Healing
- E 63385 Education for Peace and Justice
- E 64063 Supervised Practicum in Spiritual Direction *II*
- E 63100 The Phenomenon of Christian Worship

Murnion.	M 2:30-6:20*	K 215
Shea	M 2:30	K 110
Ciaramella	M 4:30	K 218
Ruffing	T 12:00-2:30	M 308
Durka	T 2:30	K 206
Shea	T 2:30	K 205
Fox	T 4:30	K 120
Regan	T 4:30	K 215
Hollywood	T 7:00	K 116
Nelson	W 12:30	M 308
Gray	W 2:30	K 215
Durka	W 2:30	K 208
Ellis	W 4:30	K 214
Ruffing	W 4:30	K 105
* Shea	W 7:00	K 121
Ellis	Th 12:30	K 214
Durka	Th 2:30	K 208
Wright	Th 2:30	K 110
* Nelson	Th 4:30	K 104
Ryan J.B.	Th 4:30	K 215
* Elias	Th 7:00	K 219
Ruffing	F 2:00-4:30	K 114
Harris H.V.	F 2:30	K 215

Offered on alternate Mondays (double class) starting February 1, 1988

pring 1988 Registration data:

- re-registration for matriculated students: Dec. 1-11 (K 307)
- registration: January 19-20 1-4PM (K 307)
- classes begin: Tuesday, January 19

Mailing Address:

Fordham University  
 Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education  
 Bronx, N.Y. 10458-5163 (Phone) 212-579-2537

Core Concentration Directors:

Parish/Pastoral: J. Shea/M. Harris  
 Spirituality: J. Ruffing  
 Children's/  
 Family: G. Durka  
 Adolescent: J. Nelson  
 Adult: J. Elias  
 Generalist: V. Novak (Pre-reg. see J. Nelson)

0/29/87

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A MODEL PROGRAM

Concentration: Parish/Pastoral Ministry and Church Leadership  
(Model B: Parish Administrators and Directors of Religious Education)

Co-Directors: Maria Harris, Ed.D. and Gloria L. Durka, Ph.D.

Core Courses:

- RE 63220 The Nature and Mission of the Christian Community
- RE 63424 Foundations of Religious Education  
(or RE 63483 Community, Family and Religious Education)
- RE 63987 Parish Ministry: Leadership, Possibilities and Practice  
(6 cr.)

Specially Recommended: (at least 3)

- RE 63100 The Phenomenon of Christian Worship
- RE 63147 Sacraments of Initiation
- RE 63163 Lay Ministry: Theology and Practice
- RE 63464 The Religious and Educational Development of Children
- RE 63531 Evangelization: New Insights of Christian Ministry
- RE 63742 Forming Parish Ministry

From Biblical Studies: (at least 2)

- RE 63013 From Story to Scripture: Shaping the Old Testament
- RE 63061 Biblical Theology: The Synoptic Gospels
- RE 63066 The Gospel of Matthew  
(especially recommended as basic Old and New Testament courses, but any RE 630-- optional)

From other courses in Theology (Sacramental/Liturgical, Systematic, Moral, Spiritual): (at least 2)

- RE 63206 Foundations in Systematic Theology (recommended intro)
- RE 63350 Images of the Human in the Christian Story  
(or RE 63351 Theology of the Human Person)
- RE 63388 Moral Theology: Living the Christian Life  
(or any other RE 631--, RE 632--, RE 633--)

From other courses in Human Development (Psychology, Sociology, Educational Theory, Pastoral/Spiritual Counseling, Leadership):  
(at least 1)

- RE 63580 Adult Learning and Development
- RE 63654 Life Cycle II: Middle Years and Older Adulthood  
(or RE 63650 Life Cycle I: Early Years, Adolescence and Young Adulthood)
- RE 63840 Foundations for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults  
(or any other RE 634--, RE 636--, RE 640--)

N.B. For full time students (i.e. 12 graduate credits a semester) there is the privilege of a registered audit each Fall and Spring semester to supplement the 12 courses chosen from above.

All students are encouraged to work out their individual programs with their Director. The Director need not either be a mentor of the M.A. or A.P.D. research paper nor the advisor for the M.S. project.